

Natural Environment Group

Summer Newsletter 2021



The Forum have been progressing NEG project work throughout 2021, and we look forward to updating you at the next on-line NEG meeting scheduled for 17th November.

NEG Funded Projects

Each year NEG provides up to £4,000 in awards to projects that seek to improved environmental outcomes in the Solent.

The projects on-going include:

- Saltmarsh passive regrowth promotion – Old Bursledon. [Study will conclude in 2022.](#)
- Using height markers on lamp columns to raise flood awareness and encourage climate action in Portsmouth. [Results expected summer 2021.](#)
- Tackling the microplastic pollution – testing a new biocomposite material as artificial filtration device, in Chichester Harbour. [Results expected 2022.](#)

Updates will be provided at the next NEG meeting.

NEG Meeting

The next NEG meeting will be held on **17th November**, and agenda and paper will be sent out in the October.

The agenda this year which will include an update on SEMS actions to NEG; an update on NEG funded projects; an update on the Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group; an update on Impact of Paddlesports in the Solent Project (IMP Solent) and presentations on a number of subjects.

Please let Karen know of any projects you would like to present.

SEMS Actions to NEG

We have been working on the SEMS actions set for NEG in 2020; a full report will be presented at the NEG November meeting. Work is on-going as follows:

- Shore based bait digging and hand-gathering - Solent Mudflat Disturbance Project
- Littering and especially plastics - Clean Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS) continues to signpost initiatives for littering and many other water quality impacts. The Solent Forum has started a new hub, Solent Plastics Pollution Hub - [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub.](#)
- The impacts of mooring and anchoring by supporting The Remedies Project - [Solent Forum - Habitat Restoration](#)
- The impacts and management options for Paddleboarding in the Solent (IMP).
- Linking the evidence base of activities with impacts on SEMS using the project above.

Solent Forum Hubs and Webpages

The Solent Forum now have a number of hubs and webpages on our websites to signpost information of relevance to the Solent Natural Environment:

[Clean Solent Shores and Seas](#) (CSSS)

[Building Biodiversity in the Solent](#) (BBS)

[Habitat Restoration](#) Webpages which shows progress on Solent Seagrass restoration and the work of REMEDIES

A further hub is being developed – [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#).

Solent Plastics Pollution Hub

The Solent Forum are working in partnership with the Environment Agency (EA) to deliver a Solent Plastics Pollution Hub. This hub will link closely with the Clean Solent Shores and Seas Project providing a lasting legacy for the EA's Preventing Plastics Pollution Project which concludes in March 2023. The objective of the new hub is to:

Provide a plastics and litter hub for the Solent and whole river catchments, to promote and share information and best practice on plastics and litter clean up and reduction, building on the community network created within the Interreg Preventing Plastics Pollution project.

The hub will support communication and resources/ideas sharing/event planning between established groups using both a website and Facebook - [Solent Plastics Pollution Hub | Facebook](#) and [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#). It will enable members of the public to identify groups/events to get involved with as well as directing them to resources to help inspire behavioural change.

Impacts and Management of Paddleboards in the Solent (IMP Solent)

The objective of the project is:

Develop the evidence base on the impacts of paddle boarding on the Solent's designated habitats and species, in particular birds, and explore suitable management options, using Chichester Harbour as a case study.

Actions:

1. List current national and local evidence
2. Agree proposed new evidence and case study approach
3. How to link the evidence to Solent's designated habitats and species
4. Detail who could collect evidence, training and procedures
5. Outline management tools with pros and cons

A meeting was held between Bird Aware, Chichester Harbour Conservancy and the Solent Forum on 26th May 2021 to agree a project brief and methodology. Work is on-going to develop the evidence base using Chichester Harbour as a case study. A follow-up meeting will be held on 9th September and a report will be made to NEG in November. [Solentems - Impacts and Management of Paddlesports in the Solent \(IMP Solent\)](#).

Solent Mudflat Disturbance Project

Understanding the impacts of shore based fishing is a key action for NEG and a working group has been established – the Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group. A priority is the need to map out sensitive areas that are impacted by this activity (hand gathering and bait digging). A key source of data is the University of Portsmouth's Temith data (drone and satellite mapping of the intertidal). Additional funding from Natural England means that the University can build on data already gathered, focusing on hand gathering and bait collecting in Chichester Harbour. The Solent Forum and Natural England are looking at identifying sensitive areas to guide and focus work, a meeting will be set up which will also involve the IFCA's.

Sussex IFCA have data on numbers of hand gatherers and amounts collected and UoP have tasked a student with the job of processing and extrapolating the data. UoP have produced a report for the Sussex IFCA and are awaiting comments before meeting about next steps.

A full update will be provided at the next NEG meeting and UoP will present the report above.
[Solentems - Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group.](#)

Impacts of Drones

Bird Aware Solent collect data in their annual survey on drone sightings. In 2019/20 the data shows low numbers of drone sightings and no sightings of drones causing disturbance. In 2020/21 the data was affected by Coronavirus as fewer surveys were taken. It showed a similar picture of low sightings.

Summer drone usage is not thought to be an issue as birds have a more abundant food supply and disturbance would have less of an effect to their overall health. This will continue to be monitored in the SEMS process.

Clean Solent Shores and Seas

The Solent Forum continues to populate this hub with information and in particular initiatives relevant to water quality in the Solent.

The [Nutrients](#) page has now been populated.

MMO work on Marine non-licensable activities

Marine non-licensable activities are those which do not require a marine licence. These include shore based activities such as bait collection and beach recreation as well as water based activities such as sailing and motor boating. The MMO have provided a paper which sets out the roles of different authorities in the management of marine non-licensable activities in England, with a focus on those that lie outside the remit of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) in accordance with better regulation principles. This principle centres on reducing regulatory burdens, particularly in areas of regulation overlap. See: [Management Rationale Paper.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Please contact Karen McHugh for any further information on the work of NEG.